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Essay
on
Dyspepsia

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On

Dyspepsia

As a student cannot be expected to have it in his power to offer many new and valuable observations on a subject, which has, for a long time, claimed the attention of men of the greatest genius, industry and experience, it will not be a matter of sur-prise, that in this treatise, little is to be found original, except the phraseology.

Dyspepsia is a disease, which is oftentimes extremely difficult and perplexing in its management. It attacks persons in every situation in life, though it particularly selects as its victims, the studious, the unfortunate, the indolent and the intemperate.

Its symptoms are; flatulence, eructations of various kinds, py-rosis, cardialgia, gastrodynia, nausea and vomiting, a sensa-tion of heat referred to the stomach, a gnawing sensation in the stomach especially when empty, constipation, irregular and disturbed sleep, furred tongue; the appetite is various in some cases it is voracious, in others every kind of food disgusts; in others it is depraved, soliciting most improper articles as dirt, chalk, &c. Generally there is great depression of spirits, and the

patient feels languid and disinclined to use any kind of exertion.

Owing to the powerful sympathies of the stomach, most distressing and sometimes most alarming affections are induced. These, however, generally disappear upon a removal of the gastric disorder.

The causes of Dyspepsia are: intemperance in eating or drinking; the use of strong tea or coffee, of acids or of gross or indigestible food; the habitual and excessive use of opium, ardent spirits, bitters or aromatics; frequent vomiting; the habitual use of nitre; excess in venery; an indolent and sedentary life; grief or vexation of mind; intense study or application to business; decayed teeth and a foul mouth

Treatment.- It is important that the patient should relinquish all such practices as have any agency in the production of the disease. When the disease is but slight, this will sometimes cause its removal. Anxiety or depression of mind occasioned by misfortune in business, often induces an extremely obstinate form of dyspepsia. Here we should be careful not to push our treatment too far, as while this state of mind continues, we can do little more than palliate the symptoms. In these cases, a fortunate

change in the affairs of the patient, will do more towards the cure of his complaint, than any article the Materia Medica affords.

The first indication in the treatment of this disease, is to remove all acrid and offensive matters from the stomach and bowels.

To relieve the stomach of its offending contents, we resort to an emetic. Ipecacuanha is to be preferred for this purpose, as it evacuates the stomach without occasioning violent vomiting. Some have thought that it possessed a peculiar power in the cure of dyspepsia.

For the purpose of evacuating the bowels, the milder Laxatives are to be preferred.

Rhubarb is an excellent aperient in this disease, as it possesses a tonic as well as a laxative property. It is often objectionable on account of its astringent nature. This may be obviated by combining it with magnesia or either of the alkalies or their carbonates or with soap.

A combination of Lac Sulphuris and Magnesia in equal parts, is recommended as a laxative, admirably suited to such a state of the bowels as usually exists in dyspepsia

The Bile of the Ox - dried in a dish by the heat of a sand bath

Windham

New London

is said to act as a certain and active Laxative, and may perhaps in some cases be advantageously prescribed.

Aloes are regarded by some as a useful Laxative in dyspepsia.

Pills formed of a combination of Laxatives are highly useful in this dis-ease. Lee's pills are of this kind.

As dyspepsia is often ~~[illegible]~~ of long continuance, it is necessary that the patient should endeavour to have a daily evacuation without the employment of cathartics. If the patient depends entirely upon Laxatives for unloading the bowels, their use becomes habitual. Dr. Parrish attended an elderly Lady in her last illness, who had been, for thirty years, in the habit of taking every night about bed time a quantity of Rhubarb, to move her bowels.

When the discharges are fœtid and of a dark colour, indicating a disordered state of the biliary secretion, the alterative use of Mercury is highly beneficial.

Another indication is, to restore tone to the stomach and bowels. A variety of tonic articles have been resorted to for this purpose. The Peruvian Bark has been much employed, but its effects are not always satisfactory. "Dyspepsia from an obstructed state of the chylo-poietic viscera, certainly would not be benefitted by it, and even

when dependent on mere debility of the stomach; to which it would seem most appropriate. I have not found it to do well, rather oppressing than invigorating that viscus, and sometimes exciting nausea and general distress" Chapman.

The Cinchonine or salt of bark will probably be found, to answer much better than the bark in substance, as in the proper dose, it is far less irritating to the stomach.

Gentian is often serviceable, it may be used in powder, infusion or extract. If the patient has been in the habit of chewing tobacco and feels its loss pretty sensibly, he may substitute gentian for it. The saliva should be swallowed.

Chamomile flowers are frequently chewed as a substitute for tobac-co. The salivary infusion (if I may be allowed the expression) proves tonic and invigorating to the stomach.—

The Bitter Tinctures, the Tinctures of Bark, the Aromatic Tinctures, and Ardent Spirits are to be avoided. In this complaint the use of these articles has a peculiar tendency to induce habits of intemperance By stimulating the stomach to increased exertion, and something like a healthy performance of its functions, they mitigate the distressing symptoms, though they rarely if ever accomplish a complete cure of the

disease. Their effects, ~~[illegible]~~ it is well known, are but evanescent. After the excitement which they have caused has subsided; the symptoms recur with equal if not additional violence. The patient again and again resorts to his palliative, of necessity increasing the dose; and perceives not his danger, until it is too late. He becomes enlisted under the banners of that merciless destroyer of all that is great and noble in the human character.. habitual intemperance.

Was authority wanted to corroborate this statement; we have it in the almost daily instances of the fate of dyspeptics who have sought relief from any of these articles. We have it, in the testimonies of the most respectable and enlightened physicians.

The following anecdote which exhibits the experience & opinions of the justly celebrated Dr. Fothergill, in a strong light, deserves to be generally known.

Dr. Parke, while a student, in London, in the course of a conversation he had with Dr. Fothergill, was informed by him of the apparent advantage many of his dyspeptic patients had derived from the use of ardent spirits, and of

his great confidence in the remedy. Previous, however, to the departure of Dr Parke from England for this country, Dr Fothergill called upon him, in order to remove any impressions he (Dr Parke) might have received from that conversation, in favour of the use of ardent spirits in dyspepsia. He stated, that so many of his dyspeptic patients had become habitual drunkards, that he now considered the employment of ardent spirits in this disease, totally unwarrantable.

In those cases where the disease has been caused by the intemperate use of ardent spirits, they are not perhaps so highly objectionable. Yet even here, as the cure depends upon a complete reformation of the habit, it is adviseable to resort to some other articles of a stimulating nature.

Enough has now been said on this subject. I shall therefore proceed to mention other tonics employed for the cure of dyspepsia —

Columbo. often proves highly valuable in this disease. It is given alone or with other substances and is to be used in powder or infusion.

Quassia. This article is deserving of some confidence. It is given in infusion or extract —

The Hop. The infusion of the hop is often advantageously prescribed. It is peculiarly adapted to that form of the disease which arises from intemperance in the use of alcoholic drinks.

The Mineral tonics are often employed, of these the preparations of iron are to be preferred.

Ferri Sub Carbonas. vel Rubigo Ferri. This is the preparation of iron used in Dr. Rush's chalybeate powders. It is also given in the form of pills a dissolved in wine.

Ferri Sulphas. This preparation possesses considerable tonic power. Its dose is small and hence it is conveniently ~~as~~ exhibited in pills.

Ferri Phosphas. This possesses much the same properties as the sulphate, and is adapted to the same purposes.

Ferri Prussias. This preparation which has lately been introduced into practice, as an article possessing highly tonic properties, and greatly extolled as a remedy in intermittent fever, has not yet, to my knowledge been employed in dyspepsia, but if it really deserves the encomiums which have been lavished upon it as a tonic, it will not be long before we hear of its being a very valuable remedy in this complaint.

Ferri Limatura. The iron given in its pure state in the form of iron filings. is thought by some, to be better adapted to dyspepsia, than either its oxides or its salts. This is far from being the general opinion. although, when the iron is exhibited in this state. it is. unquestionably, sometimes productive of much benefit.

But a tonic superior to all others, in dyspepsia, is exercise. Be it of what kind it may. it should not be employed immediately after a meal. It should be more or less severe. according to the ability of the patient to bear it.

Cheerful company, by withdrawing the attention of the patient from his sufferings; and by the exhilaration of spirits which it causes, often contributes to invigorate the system

Change of scene operates in the same manner and is often of great use.

The waters of certain mineral springs are much celebrated for their tonic powers. The advantage derived from a visit to such springs, is not to be entirely attributed to the use of their waters, as these, if drank at home, would not be productive of the same benefit. The exercise of travelling, the cheerful society usually met with, in such excursions. and the change of scene assist in performing a cure.

By increasing the excitement of the cutaneous vessels, which in this disease are generally in a torpid state, the system will be invigorated. The excitement of the cutaneous vessels may be increased, by the use of

The cold bath, if after its employment reaction takes place, the consequence of which will be a glow over the whole surface But if we have reason to believe, that from the debility of the patient, reaction will not soon take place, or that it will be irregular or partial, we may resort to the

Warm bath, to which stimulating articles as, salt, mustard &c. may be added. This should always be taken in a warm room. After coming out, the patient is to be wiped perfectly dry.

Frictions with a flannel or brush, either alone or aided by some stimulating article, may be, sometimes, advantageously employed.

To preserve the cutaneous excitement, as well as to protect the patient from the vicissitudes of the weather, flannel should be worn next to the skin.

The feet of dyspeptics are generally cold, owing to the can-

-guidness of the circulation through them. This coldness of the feet is, not only, very distressing to the patient, but also tends to protract the disease. To Dr Physick, we are indebted for an easy method of removing this troublesome symptom. It is, the wearing a pair of flannel socks or woollen stockings, the inner surfaces, of which, have been sprinkled with Cayenne pepper. If owing to the dryness and insensibility of the skin, the pepper should not take effect, the feet should be soaked in warm water rendered somewhat stimulating by the addition of salt mustard or ashes. After this they should be wiped dry, and again introduced into the peppered stockings. This treatment applied to the feet of a healthy person, would produce a sensation of burning, almost intolerable, but in those of a dyspeptic it never produces more than a pleasant glow.

There are several affections attendant on dyspepsia, which now demand notice, and first,

Cardialgia or Heart Burn. This is an extremely distressing affection, arising from the presence of acid in the stomach.

The Sub Nitrate of Bismuth, has been recommended as affording considerable relief. Although it has undoubtedly been of service

in some instances. Little confidence appears to be reposed in it. by the physicians in this city.

As cardialgia arises from the presence of acid in the stomach, it may be relieved by correcting the acidity by means of an al-kali or an alkaline earth. The following preparations are among those most frequently employed.

The Alkaline Infusion. This though a homely, is oftentimes a very valuable remedy. It seems not only to palliate this distressing symptom by neutralizing the acid in the stomach, but also by giving tone to the stomach to contribute to the cure of the disease. It is prepared in the following manner. To a quart of hickory ashes and a tea-cup-full of soot, a gallon of boiling water is to be added. These articles should be stirred up well together, then allowed to stand for four and twenty hours, when the liquid is to be decanted for use.

The fixed alkalies and their carbonates are often employed, and may be given in solution, pills or julap, or in the form of soap.

The carbonate of ammonia is frequently employed with advantage. It is exhibited in solution (the Aqua carbonatis ammoniae) or in pills

Equal parts of lime-water and milk form an excellent remedy in these cases.

Magnesia is well adapted to those cases, where constipation exists.

The cretaceous preparations are useful, when a laxative effect is not desirable.

Pyrosis is another extremely distressing affection, symptomatic of dyspepsia. It consists in a painful spasmodic contraction of the stomach, followed by a flow of a thin fluid from the mouth. This fluid is sometimes of such an acid quality, as to set the teeth as completely on edge as if the mouth had been rinsed with slightly diluted elixir of vitriol.

An emetic is recommended in these cases, not only to evacuate the stomach, but also by its alterative effects upon this viscus, to bring about a more healthy action. Some cases yield to the first emetic, the larger number require two or three. But where emetics have not produced any permanent good effects, & where an emetic would be improper, there are other articles which may be used with advantage in this affection. Among these, the

Sub. Nitrate of Bismuth is an article which has been highly

recommended. Its standing in this affection is the same as in cardialgia.

The Antacids just mentioned as useful in cardialgia are often of service in pyrosis. Opium is useful as a palliative.

Gastrodynia is an extremely painful affection, which sometimes accompanies dyspepsia. A number of antispasmodics have been recommended for its relief. Of these opium is the best.

New milk is sometimes employed with advantage.

Distending the stomach with tepid water often proves beneficial, not less so, the taking a small quantity of boiling water. The former is supposed to act by relaxing, the latter by stimulating the stomach

If the spasm should be alarming, & if it does not yield to these remedies, a blister should be applied over the stomach. This is often productive of great advantage

A number of articles are recommended as useful in preventing a recurrence of the paroxysm. Among these are: Hiera Picra. Elixir Proprietatis. Warners Cordial. Vol. Tinct. Guiac. Spirit of Turpentine. Sub Nitrate of Bismuth.

Flatulence. Dyspeptic patients are often much troubled with accumulations of flatus in the bowels, giving rise to what

is commonly termed flatulent colic. In its treatment opium and ether are useful. So is the Spt. of Turpentine either alone or combined with the oil of mint, in the dose of 15 or 20 drops of the former with 5 of the latter. This may be taken in a little powdered sugar.

The aromatics are much employed for the relief of this affection. Ginger tea, Mint tea &c are often of service. As there is generally, in these cases some acidity in the primæ viæ, it is not uncommon to exhibit an aromatic in combination with an antacid.

Should the affection be very distressing or prove very obstinate, fomentations with hot brandy, or the application of a spiced plaster to the abdomen will be found useful.

Diet. It is necessary to pay strict attention to the diet, in dyspepsia. The food should be simple and easy of digestion. Milk often agrees well with a dyspeptic stomach. Sometimes when milk will not be well received by the stomach, cream will answer well, Oysters raw or lightly cooked are generally a pleasant and proper article of diet. So are eggs lightly cooked. Chocolate when properly prepared, often answers well for break-

-fast instead of coffee. Coffee and green tea should be prohibi-
-ted. At dinner the patient may eat beef, mutton, the flesh of
white poultry or game, but veal, lamb, pork and vegetables
are to be forbidden. So should fried oysters or fried meat of
any kind, as the empyreumatic crust which covers them, is
extremely indigestible. There is no species of dessert which is
not objectionable. Pastry is inadmissible. Crackers, stale bread,
or bread made of unbolted flour (which last is of a laxative
nature & readily digestible), may be used. No toast is to be allow-
-ed. It is a common opinion that dry toast is proper, but
this is not the case, as it is very apt to undergo the acetous
fermentation, and is very difficult of digestion. All kinds
of cakes, as buck-wheat cakes, short cakes, &c. &c and hot bread
should be avoided.

The best article of drink for a dyspeptic is water. Good
sound Madeira, old Sherry or Port wine may sometimes
be allowed. The poorer wines are injurious. Let the article
of drink be what it may, the patient should use but little.
Ginger tea is an excellent drink when there is much distress
of stomach immediately after eating or between meals. It

produces much the same palliative effects as brandy, and water without leading to the same baneful consequences.

It may now be proper to say a few words concerning the necessity which exists, in some cases of dyspepsia, of a departure from the common rules of practice. Sometimes a patient will suffer a long time under dyspepsia, and although he should attend strictly to the injunctions of his physician yet his health may not be much improved, when suddenly the stomach will crave some particular kind of food, and this craving will be constant and in some instances almost unconquerable. This Dr Parrish denominates the language of the stomach, and he thinks that the gratification of this desire is often attended with beneficial effects.

"But there is a false language of the stomach, arising from a petulant and fretful disposition. The patient seeing others around him enjoying themselves, sets to work to contrive what he may eat, and in in a short time will have fixed perhaps on a dozen articles of food. If he indulges in the use of any one of them, he generally suffers for it. But where there is a constant craving for one kind of food,

you will rarely do wrong in allowing it to your patient." Paris's Lectures

It only after the disease has for sometime resisted a systematic plan of treatment, that the Dr advises a resort to this practice, in support of which he relates the following among other anec--dotes of a similar kind

Dr Kuhn attended a gentleman in this city, E--- S---. with dyspepsia. His stomach was very acid. the Dr gave him antacids and was particular in his dietetic plan of treatment. But for a long time the disease baffled every plan of treatment. when suddenly the stomach demanded pickles and vine--gar. The appetite was indulged and the patient recovered.

Such is the description and treatment of the more common forms of dyspepsia. There are other forms of it which demand a somewhat different treatment. But as it would be consu--ming time unnecessarily for me to attempt to give an account of them, since they are so well described elsewhere. I shall now conclude my brief essay with this remark: that proper ex--ercise and regulation of the diet are circumstances which demand the strictest attention, without which all our remedies will be of little avail—